Critique of the Wall
Sources, Notes, and Examples


“Albrecht Dürer’s famous machine (1525) for example, consisting of an eyepiece and a glass panel, was mainly intended to demonstrate a rigid method for copying nature by cutting a section literally through the cone of vision. Significantly, Dürer’s machine is still an appropriate metaphor for the scientific objectification of reality. It shows man placing the world in his cone of vision, making it difficult to acknowledge the reciprocity of perception by the Other (originally God), the intersubjective (erotic) reality that makes us possible as embodied consciousness in the first place. Philosophically, this coincides with the growing occultation of Being in what Heidegger calls “the age of world picture,” the substitution of the world as presence for a fragmentary world of decontextualized objects awaiting our exploitation, a mere re-presented reality that necessarily conceals its ground of truth: that is, the horizon of things, now excluded by the frame. In retrospect we can recognize this as a precedent of our technological vision, the public reality in and through which the architect’s work must “speak.”” p. 34 *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*

“There was an overlapping of the notion of section as a cut with that of section as shadow or imprint, revealing the presence of light and the order of the day (a propitious time), yet framed by the order of architecture, which was capable of enduring darkness.” p. 40 *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*

“The coordination of the vertical and horizontal sections of buildings reveals that light and shadow constituted the architecture’s symbolic order, very much in the spirit of Vitruvius, who had introduced gnomons—together with machinae and buildings—as one of the three artifacts within the province of architecture. Measuring time and space through poetic mimesis was the original task of the architects. The obsession with revealing the inside of bodies—dissecting and magnifying as roads to knowledge—took hold of European epistemology only after the mechanization of physiology in the seventeenth century.” p. 40 *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*

“Michelangelo’s entire work emphasized life and movement—qualities that were often excluded from architectural theory in the Renaissance. Michelangelo’s anatomy always focused on the live body, associating beauty with health. He acknowledged the life of the whole through the articulation (the hinge) of fragments of the human body. Consequently, Michelangelo rarely expressed depth through geometric perspective. Rather, he understood depth as the primary dimension and disclosed it by capturing the movement of a figure. This movement in Michelangelo’s drawings must still be called foreshortening, but here it implies the definition of forms in movement, in length, breadth, and depth in which their mutual interrelationships are
not fixed. The artifact, painting, sculpture, or building captured the motion of purposeful life in a single instant. Profoundly influenced by his belief in the reality of Christ as God incarnated in a mortal body, Michelangelo’s work seems intent on dissolved the opposition between life and death; it thus reveal the “flesh” of the world, the primordial substance of a live universe.” p. 41 Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge

“Sciagraphy (also written "sciography," meaning etymologically the inscription or description of shadows) was generally understood until the seventeenth century as “the art of drawing shadows.” Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, it also referred to a cut or section of a building.” p. 46 Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge

“Barbaro argues that scenographia, which is “related to the use of perspective,” is the design of stage for the three dramatic genres. Appropriate types of buildings must be shown diminishing in size and receding toward the horizon. He does not agree with “those that wish to understand perspective (perspettiva) as one of the ideas that generate architectural design (dispositione).” To him it is plain that "just as animals belong by nature to a certain species," the idea that belongs with plan (ichnographia) and elevation (orthographia) is the section (il profilo, detto sciographia), because it is similar to those two other “ideas” that constitute architectural order (dispoitione).” pp. 46-49 Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge

“Humanity’s participation in the symbolic (and divine) order of the world was starting to become a matter of self-conscious faith rather than self-evident embodied in knowledge, despite the pervasive (an unquestionably influential) deistic and Masonic affirmation of the coincidence between revealed and scientific truths. The corresponding chasm between the autonomous art object and a passive observer—that is, the potential non-sense of "art for art’s sake"—was also first articulated at this time in early discussion on aesthetics (by Alexander Baumgarten), to become a crucial problem for architects and artists ever since. The concept of theatrical space as the space of architecture coincided with architects’ growing realization that meaning itself might be a matter of convention, rather than being guaranteed by nature.” p. 76 Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge

“Nineteenth century man (and not the baroque prince) finally could assume a dominating gaze capable of controlling the social and natural world through the pure light of reason, supposedly devoid of shadows. We can perceive here (and not in baroque perspective representation) the possibility of truly reductive forms of representation leading to the universe of prosaic forms of simulation (such as journalistic photography, realistic films, and television) that proliferate in our world. Through this consummated synthesis of optics and geometrical perspective, light risked losing its traditional status as the mysterious horizon of things. We may recall how, in Martin Heidegger’s diagnosis, the possibility of overcoming technological enframing—the reduction of the world of our experience to a “picture,” and of live nature to an inventory of exploitable natural resources supposedly capable of sustaining an ever-growing economy—is related to a potential awareness of the mystery of light.” pp. 82-83 Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge


“We have formerly observed, that the Ornaments annexed to all sorts of Buildings make an essential Part of Architecture, and it is manifest that every Kind of Ornament is not proper for every Kind of Structure. Thus we are to endeavor, to the utmost if our Power, to make our sacred Works, especially adorned as possible, as being intended for the Honour of the Gods; whereas profane Structures are designed entirely for Men.” p. 162 *The Ten Books of Architecture*

“And here it will be proper to call to Mind what has been said elsewhere, that of Ways some are properly Highways, others in a manner but private ones; as also, that there must be Difference between the Ways within the City, and those in the Country.” p. 162 *The Ten Books of Architecture*

“The Ancients therefore chose their Sepulchres in convenient and conspicuous Places by the Side of Highways, and embellished them, as far as their Abilities and the Skill of the Architect would reach, with a perfect Prousion of Ornaments. They were built after the noblest Designs; no Columns or Pillasters were spared for, nor did they want the richest Incrustations, nor any Delicacies that Sculpture or Painting could afford; and they were generally adorned with Busts of Brass or marble finished after the most exquisite Taste: By which Custom how much that prudent People promoted the Service of the Commonwealth and good Manners, would be tedious now to recapitulate. I shall only just touch upon those Points which make to our present Purpose. And how, think ye, must it delight Travelers as they passed along the Appian Way, or any other great Road, to find them full of Tombs of the most excellent Workmanship, and to be every Moment picking out some more beautiful than the rest, and observing the Epotaphs and Effigies of their greatest Men?” p. 163 *The Ten Books of Architecture*

“But this was the least of the good Effects which they produced; and it was of much more Importance that they conduced not a little the Preservation of the
Commonwealth, and of the Fortunes of the private Persons. One of the chief Causes why the Rich rejected the Agrarian Law, as we are informed by the Historian Appian, was because they looked upon it to be an Impiety to suffer the Property of the Tombs of their Forefathers to be transferred to others. How many great Inheritance may we therefore suppose them to have left untouched to their Posterity merely upon this Principle of Duty, Piety or Religion, which else would have been prodigally wasted in Riot and Gaming?“ p. 163 The Ten Books of Architecture


"Not just a wall, but a wall suspended from the earth: this first element of construction at once exposes and dissembles. As caesura, impassable limit, it annuls or pushes to the margins as superfluous the articulations of the organism. To the extent that this wall is a mass floating in the air, its turn shattered—with perverse neatness—by a cut that permits the "surprise“ outward thrust of Mussolini’s platform, it declares itself “mask.” The essentiatlity of this primary structure, with its chorus of tones, yields an awareness that its apodictic security hides something. Although undisputed protagonist, it is a character in search of an author.“ p. 274 M. Tafuri in Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques

"A more important point is that, having revealed the hidden composition of the forces internal to the structure and having reduced them to arabesque, to design, the lines further divide the connections between the multiple “sounds” emitted by what seemed to constitute an apodictic word.” p. 274 M. Tafuri in Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques

"There is thus an oscillation between the knowledge offered by the drawing and that available through experience. Both conditions of interpretation are partial, and while they could be said to add up to one unified reading, the fact is that the window itself serves to indicate the difference between the two. It is almost like seeing the virtual points of a space in a mirror, which, while they can be seen and experienced, not exist as such in “real” space. On the other hand, while the real space seen in the mirror can be measured and conventionally transcribed, the altering mediation of the mirror is not diminished.” p. 301 Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations Decompositions Critiques


see the work of Caravagio, Rembrandt, Bernini, Boromini, Francesco Colona, Peranesi, Le Corbusier, Robert Ryman, Gordon Matta-Clark, and Diller+Scofidio

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